

PROPERTY PLANNING COMMON ELEMENTS

COMPONENTS OF MASTER PLANS

HABITATS AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

Farmland

Description

State-owned lands may contain parcels that are temporarily or permanently used for agricultural practices compatible with achieving the management objectives of the property. Per s.23.0912(1g), Wis. Stats, the department may enter into agreements with farmers to plant agricultural crops, harvest hay, or graze department lands as a management technique. The purpose is to achieve desirable vegetative manipulation on department-owned lands for wildlife and recreational uses with a minimum of public expense.

Parcels may be farmed for several years before being restored to a permanent cover type or farmed on a longer-term basis to help achieve other management objectives. For example, rotational cropping can be a cost-effective way to keep an area free of woody encroachment or invasion by exotic species while it awaits restoration to a native cover type (prairie, wetland, or forest). Crops such as corn, oats, winter wheat, soybeans, alfalfa, and sunflowers provide wildlife food sources and hunting opportunity. Hay harvest or grazing in grasslands is used as a vegetation management tool to meet various objectives (e.g., to reduce invasive species, help maintain access to hunter walking trails, or maintain/improve nesting habitat), and also provides livestock forage. Crop establishment typically is done through farming agreements with local farmers or cooperative agreements with conservation organizations.

The use of certain genetically modified plants and certain pesticides may be harmful to fish and wildlife, and certain farming techniques may contribute to nutrient pollution and soil runoff. These threats will be managed by executing farming agreements in accordance with the department's farming agreement policy.

Ecological Landscape Opportunities

Farmland can occur on department properties statewide to facilitate property management goals.

Threats

- Commodity prices and availability of willing farmers can limit the use of farming on state lands.

Management Techniques

- Farming practices
- Grazing
- Mowing/brushing and haying
- Pesticide treatments



Management Prescriptions

- Provide migration or winter food for wildlife species at strategic locations by planting crops that provide grains or seeds and leaving some of the crop unharvested. These sites can also provide recreational hunting opportunity.
- Plant scattered plots of two to ten acres in sunflowers or other agricultural crops and manipulate them to attract doves for hunting. When plants are mature, mow portions of the fields to disperse the seeds on the ground and create open areas where doves prefer to forage.
- Use farming to prepare fields for conversion to native habitat where long-term cropping is not needed in order to meet other management objectives.
- Utilize haying and grazing in combination with appropriate soil and water conservation practices to efficiently develop and maintain nesting habitat for wildlife.
- In the event of a drought emergency declared by the Governor, department lands may be opened to emergency haying and grazing under certain conditions.

